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“THE FUR-LINED RUT”: TELEWORK AND CAREER AMBITION

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Introduction

For many knowledge workers, teleworking is the new normal. Telework refers to the practice of working away from the office for some part of the work week, while keeping in contact using information technology (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015). This practice is growing in popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, with research from the Trades Union Congress demonstrating that the number of employees who report “usually” working from home increased by 19% between 2005 and 2016 in the United Kingdom, and US Census Bureau data showing that the number of American employees working on a regular basis from home grew by 115% between 2005 and 2015 (Calnan, 2016; Global Workplace Analytics, 2017). This trend is also represented in other parts of the world; for instance, Argentina has seen teleworkers increase from 320,000 in 2004 to approximately 2 million in 2014 (Munhoz, 2016), while 19% of non-agricultural workers in India’s formal economy work at least one day a week from home (Eurofound and the International Labour Office, 2017). In Japan, where ‘face-time’ in the office has typically been an important element of workplace culture, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is promoting trial ‘telework days’ in an effort to reduce the harmful effects of the long-hours culture as well as to prepare for the 2020 Olympics when commuting to work is likely to be significantly disrupted (Reuters, 2017). The expansion of telework can be attributed to the benefits that it brings for both employees and employers; research consistently finds that working from home is associated with increased levels of job satisfaction (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), and organizations report

significant cost savings due to reduced overheads. For example, Sun Microsystems found annual savings of \$64 million in real estate costs and \$2.5 million in electricity bills as a result of its telework program, and IBM has reported annual savings of \$100 million from reduced office space (Caldow, 2009; Lavey-Heaton, 2014).

Flexible working arrangements that enable employees to vary the timing and location of the hours they work are often portrayed as a way to keep talented women in the workforce, or as a means more generally for working parents and carers to continue climbing the career ladder while simultaneously fulfilling their family commitments (Hewlett, 2007). In support of this view, there is some empirical evidence of a positive association between career ambition and the use of flexible working arrangements in the Netherlands (Dikkers, van Engen, & Vinkenbunrg, 2010). However, a substantial amount of research in Anglo Saxon contexts suggests that there is a general perception among employees that the utilization of such arrangements has a negative effect on career advancement (Beauregard, 2011). This is particularly the case for flexible work arrangements that reduce visibility in the office, such as telework.

According to signalling theory, when decisions need to be made with incomplete information available, managers will use observable characteristics (such as physical presence in the workplace) to form inferences about unobservable characteristics (such as organizational commitment and productivity) among their employees Leslie, Manchester, Park, & Mehng, 2012; (Spence, 1973). Visibility at work often serves as a signal for work dedication and quantity and quality of work output (Bailyn, 1997), and is thus a factor in decisions regarding promotion or development opportunities. Work by Elsbach, Cable and Sherman (2010) differentiates between expected visibility, which refers to being seen at work during regular work hours, and extracurricular visibility, which refers to being seen at work outside of regular work hours. Their

research demonstrates that employees who enact expected visibility are perceived as being dependable and reliable, while those who enact extracurricular visibility are viewed as committed and dedicated. If employees are indeed being assessed on both the amount and timing of their presence in the workplace, and are expected to be “extra” visible in order to be considered ambitious and hardworking, then it is hardly surprising that those who use telework arrangements are more likely than their office-based colleagues to report experiencing both reduced visibility in the workplace and reduced career development (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012), and to see themselves as more at risk of losing their jobs during organizational restructuring processes (Richardson & Kelliher, 2015).

Concern on the part of employees that taking up flexible work arrangements will jeopardize their career progression may be justified; past empirical research has shown that the use of flexibility policies can result in lower performance evaluations (Wharton, Chivers, & Blair-Loy, 2008), and that employees who request flexibility are routinely stigmatized – particularly when they wish to work from home (Munsch, Ridgeway, & Williams, 2014). Organizational cultures that emphasize the importance of being physically present in the workplace may therefore tacitly discourage ambitious employees from availing themselves of opportunities to work from home or another location outside the workplace (Beauregard, Basile, & Thompson, 2018). The end result in such “facetime”-focused organizations is the creation of a dual-track career path, whereby individuals focused on career advancement work a standard schedule and are based primarily in the workplace, and individuals who work remotely for reasons such as care responsibilities or health issues are not considered eligible for leadership positions.

In organizations with a culture more accepting of flexible work arrangements, however, employees may not perceive to the same extent that there are negative effects on career advancement of being less visible in the workplace. Usage of telework practices may therefore not be associated with employees' career aspirations, or with concerns that progression within the organization will be stymied by working from home on a regular basis. In fact, in some organizations, managers may actually attribute employee requests for telework resources as effort to increase their ability to work more while also balancing home responsibilities (Leslie et al., 2012). In this chapter, we investigate this premise by presenting a case study that explores the link between telework usage and career ambition within an organization where remote working is an embedded practice and used by a significant proportion of the workforce. First, this chapter will describe the organizational context for the case study as well as the qualitative and quantitative methods utilized. Next, qualitative and quantitative results detailing the impact of telework on career ambition will be presented. Last, a discussion of the findings, their implications for managers and suggestions as to how organizations might address the challenges associated with telework and career ambition will be presented.

Organizational context

The research took place in a medium-sized public sector organization that provides a range of advisory and other services to employers and workers in Great Britain. The organization employs just over 900 people and has offices in England, Scotland and Wales. Telework was introduced in the organization in the 1970s in response to both employee demand and cost reduction targets, the latter of which have resulted in the closure of a number of smaller, regional offices over the years since then. In the past decade, the practice of telework within the organization has expanded considerably, in part due to office closures but also because the nature

of the work carried out by a large proportion of employees is highly suitable for working remotely: tasks require confidentiality, focus, and minimal active supervision, and are performed independently, with little need for coordination with colleagues.

Flexible working practices, particularly telework, are entrenched in the organization's culture and widely used by employees. Approximately 11% of staff members are classified as "designated teleworkers". However, telework is used on an *ad hoc* basis by a much larger number of employees. An estimated 44% of employees work regularly from home for at least 20% of their working time in a typical week. For the purposes of this chapter, we differentiate between employees who work mostly from home (teleworkers), employees who work an average of two to three days away from the office (flexible workers), and employees who work mostly at the office but who may make occasional use of the opportunity to work from home (office-based workers).

While telework is offered to the majority of the organization's staff, managerial roles require occupants to be either office-based or flexible workers. Full-time telework is not available to managers. Employees who currently work from home for all or the majority of their working week would therefore need to adjust their working patterns and develop a greater presence at their local office should they be promoted to a managerial position.

Data collection

This study formed part of a larger research project addressing a number of issues associated with telework, such as work-life conflict, enrichment, and boundary management (Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Canonico, 2016). A mixed methods approach was used to examine perceptions of career ambition among the organization's teleworkers. The first phase of the study employed a qualitative methodology, with the three researchers conducting 40 interviews among

a purposive (Marshall, 1996) sample of employees representing the range of roles and hierarchical levels in the organization, as well as its geographical distribution. All interviews took place at the local offices of the participants and were face-to-face, semi-structured, and of approximately one hour's duration. Interviews were scheduled on days when teleworkers were likely to come in to the office for team meetings in order to make their participation less burdensome. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and subsequently transcribed in full.

Participants were asked about their official working arrangements, their typical working patterns with regard to location, their interest in taking up an office-based position in future if they currently worked from home, and their career aspirations within the organization. Managers of teleworkers were asked about challenges or concerns associated with managing employees who worked from home, and at the end of the interview, all participants were encouraged to contribute any other information related to telework that had not yet been discussed but that participants felt it was important for the researchers to know.

Based on the findings from the qualitative component of the study, a quantitative, online survey was then developed in conjunction with organizational representatives to assess levels of career ambition, career orientation, personal life orientation, willingness to become office-based, and (if applicable) reasons for unwillingness to take up an office-based position for the purpose of career progression. A pilot test of the survey was conducted with 12 employees prior to full-scale distribution.

Sample

The 40 participants in the qualitative component of the study were recruited to represent as accurately as possible the entire workforce of the organization. Participants hailed from three

different geographical locations in Great Britain and were a mix of office-based staff (43%) and teleworkers and flexible workers (67%). Forty-six percent of interviewees were women.

A total of 514 employees completed the online survey, for a response rate of 56.4%. The demographic, organizational, and geographical characteristics of the sample were very similar to those of the overall population of the organization's workforce. The majority of respondents were female (57.7%), the average age of respondents was 46.2 years, and 73.3% were married or in a similar relationship. More than one third of respondents (35.2%) had at least one child under the age of 18 living in their home. Nearly all respondents reported their ethnicity as white or white British (90.5%). Respondents represented the full range of job roles and levels within the organization, with 23% being line managers, and average tenure within the organization was 11.4 years. With regard to working patterns, 54% reported being office-based, 27% reported working mostly from home, and 19% worked an average of two to three days a week from home and the remainder in the office.

Measures

Career ambition was assessed with Dikkers, van Engen and Vinkenbunrg's (2010) measure. Sample items include "I have the ambition to reach a higher position in my line of work" and "I like to be challenged in my work". Respondents answered each item on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha was .74.

Career orientation was measured with Lobel and St. Clair's (1992) career identity salience inventory. Following Song, Foo and Uy (2008), we used two of the original five items to assess career orientation: "The major satisfactions in my life come from my job" and "The most important things that happen to me involve my job." The same five-point Likert response scale was used. The reliability alpha for this measure was .77.

Personal life orientation was measured with another two of the original five items in Lobel and St. Clair's (1992) career identity salience inventory, again following Song, Foo and Uy (2008). These items were adapted to reflect respondents' personal lives in general rather than family lives in particular: "The major satisfactions in my life come from my family and friends" and "The most important things that happen to me involve my family and friends". Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .84.

Willingness to become office-based was assessed with one question, developed in conjunction with organizational representatives for this survey: "How willing would you be to take up an office-based position in the near future if it meant greater opportunity for career progression?" Respondents were asked to choose from three response options, where 1 = not at all willing, 2 = somewhat willing, and 3 = very willing.

Reasons for unwillingness to take up office-based position for career progression purposes. Employees were asked to select, from a drop down list or write-in box, the reason(s) why they would be unwilling to take on an office-based position for career progression purposes. These were developed from themes that emerged during the interviews (e.g., caring arrangements; commuting distance) and consisted of eight response options in addition to an "Other" write-in text box. The response options are listed in full in Table 5.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was conducted with the qualitative data. All three researchers followed an iterative process of reading and re-reading the interview transcripts in order to identify recurrent themes, which then became categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Initial codes were generated based on snippets of text that represented a particular concept or idea (e.g., the perceived comfort of working from home). Codes were then

sorted into themes, with overarching themes categorized as “organizing themes” and sub-themes as “basic themes” (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The researchers then reviewed the themes for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 1990), to ensure that basic themes fit together in a meaningful way, and that there were clear and identifiable distinctions between organizing themes. A summary of these themes is presented in Table 1.

For the quantitative data, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey’s honest significance difference (HSD) tests, and t-tests were conducted to test differences in mean scores on the study variables between teleworkers, flexible workers, and office-based workers.

Qualitative findings

We explored the career goals of the participants in the qualitative study by asking if there were any other positions within the organization that interested them. Many of the interviewees did not express any aspirations in terms of career development. A number of employees spoke of enjoying the work they currently did and wishing to continue in that role, but many specifically cited the need to work from the office more often in senior level roles as a “deal breaker” for them.

No, because I don't want to give up my teleworking. (Louisa, teleworker)

This was particularly the case for employees who worked from home on a full-time basis. Individuals expressed concerns about their ability to readjust to an office setting, as would be required in a higher level role.

I would find it hard to get back in to the routine of going back in to an office and staying all day in an office and then coming home. If I had to I could but I probably wouldn't choose to do that again after being a teleworker so long with all the benefits. (Timothy, teleworker)

...you get so conditioned or so used to working for yourself in your own office that to come back and have to sit in open plan like that would be very challenging for me which is very worrying really because I may have to do that in the future. (Leo, teleworker)

The perception that senior manager roles demands office presence was challenged by a senior manager who thought that the organization was misleading employees when communicating requirements for promotion. He also thought this was a sign that the organization was not embracing teleworking as fully as they should be.

Half the problem is we don't help because we say if you get promoted, we assume you have to be in the office, where what they should be saying is that if you get promoted you still don't have to be in the office...So we haven't, perhaps, taken the philosophy of [teleworking] ... as far forward as we could have done. I think that is putting in these little barriers because you should be able to say I am promoting you and by the way I am perfectly happy with you being a homeworker. (Hugh, flexible worker)

Another issue raised by participants were the difficulties associated with commuting to the organization's nearest office location to take on a higher level role. Due to the office closures facilitated by telework, the distance between home and work increased a great deal for many employees. Both the length of the commute and the financial costs of travel were cited as deterrents to working in an office-based position.

I don't think I would like to come back to the office because of the amount of travelling, the expense and the time basically. (Marina, teleworker)

I think one of the downsides of [telework] is that you can easily get into a very comfortable existence like the one I am in where you get used to not commuting, you get used to being your own boss. I am not sure that having done it for so long I could cope

with the cost and getting up in the morning and the commuting and the hassle ... so that is a consideration in terms of career progression ... It's too comfortable where I am. That's probably why I've been in the job for 14, 15 years. (Dominic, teleworker)

Even for individuals who reported a desire to advance within the organization, weighing the financial and lifestyle implications of frequent commuting against the incentives of more challenging work and increased remuneration offered by a promotion often did not result in an attractive cost-benefit ratio.

I would be interested in promotion because I know I am capable of doing more than what I am doing in terms of challenging work. It is whether the promotion would still give me the flexibility that I've got now. As I mentioned earlier, from a financial point of view I wouldn't be greatly better off and if that meant that I had to come in to the office four or five days a week I would be significantly worse off. So there is no carrot for me to do it. (Peter, teleworker)

It should be noted that reluctance to make major lifestyle changes for the sake of career advancement was not limited to teleworkers or flexible workers. There were a number of office-based workers who perceived that the trade-offs required for a more senior position, in terms of travel time to visit clients or other offices, increased responsibility, or longer work hours generally, were too steep to make promotion an attractive proposition.

When asked if they envisioned themselves working for their current organization for a long time, few interviewees who made use of telework arrangements expressed any interest in leaving the organization to advance their careers. This intention to remain with their current employer was often linked to both a sense of contentment with their current job role, and the flexibility available to employees in their current position.

I've got no reason to go. The work suits me, it suits my skills. I know so many people here and to me with all the flexibility, I know in reality I couldn't get this anywhere else, not now. So why would I go anywhere else. (Joshua, flexible worker)

Some employees and managers reflected on the negative implications for the organization of wide employee take-up and commitment to working from home. Telework was viewed as suppressing individuals' identification with the organization and their ambitions to progress their careers. These factors in turn were seen as depriving the employer of engaged, motivated workers ready to assume greater responsibility within the organization.

[P]eople put teleworking before their career aspirations. A lot of our grade, Grade 9, do work from home and wouldn't consider an office based job because they prefer to work from home so it can stifle that. (Grace, teleworker)

The disadvantages to [the organization], I think it can and has created a culture whereby people are disengaged and don't feel an allegiance to [the organization] and also have got themselves in to a position where there isn't another better role for them to do locally because they may be living in an area where there are very little job prospects. So I think it encourages them to stay in jobs long past their sell by date, which is not healthy. (Karen, manager and flexible worker)

In interviews with managers, the issue of succession planning arose repeatedly. Managers, several of whom used telework arrangements themselves, spoke of difficulties in replacing middle managers due to the reluctance of many individuals in the grade immediately below to consider putting themselves forward for promotion. A large proportion of employees in this grade worked from home for the majority of the working week, and the view of managers was that these working arrangements were either too comfortable, or too convenient with regard

to combining work and family responsibilities, for employees to be willing to eschew them for the sake of career progression.

I think the other big issue for us is about succession strategies because there is a huge chunk of what should be our middle management tier that is actually, I think, losing interest in career progression within [the organization] because they've become so comfortable with literally working at home all the time. (Graham, office-based manager)

The [drawbacks of telework] are real issues of succession planning, the lack of people who are prepared to be managers, the lack of people prepared to move out of their role into [a] public facing role. ... this is one of the reasons why people don't want to do the supervisory role, they know that the hours are long and if they've got children they are going to have to get their own childcare. (Simon, manager and flexible worker)

One manager reflected on his own history within the organization compared to the career paths taken by his fellow new hires. Although he himself currently engaged in a mix of working from home and travelling each week, his erstwhile peers had taken up full-time telework arrangements years ago and continued to work from home today.

On the day that I started, four other people started with me on that day in the same office. I am the only one who has ever done anything different in 12 years. Those four other people were all talented people who'd had serious jobs before they came here and were not less ambitious than I was, if you want to put it that way, we were a group of relative peers at the time both in terms of our experience and our aspirations. It does make me wonder if that fur lined rut is a bit of a drain on talent. I am sure that some of the people who have, with all due respect, sat in their bedrooms for the last 12 years wouldn't have done so and wouldn't have, necessarily, not progressed both through the ranks and into

different, more varied and interesting careers if they hadn't had the facility to go teleworking. (Richard, manager and flexible worker)

The use of telework arrangements, especially on a full-time basis, thus appears to have a positive effect on employee retention but yields a negative impact on career progression at the individual level and succession planning at the organizational level. The overriding theme that emerged from the qualitative findings was the prioritization of telework over career progression for many employees who worked from home on a frequent basis. The themes discussed in this section are presented in Table 1.

[INSERT TABLE 2.1 HERE]

Quantitative findings

The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables are reported in Table 2. While all respondents answered questions on career orientation and personal life orientation, willingness to become office based was only answered by employees currently designated teleworkers or flexible workers. Items measuring career ambition were positioned toward the end of the survey, and missing answers here are likely attributable to survey fatigue.

[INSERT TABLE 2.2 HERE]

An analysis of variance showed that there were significant differences in career ambition between different work arrangements, $F(3,369) = 4.66, p = .003$. These results are displayed in Table 3. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean career ambition score for teleworkers ($M = 3.55, SD = 0.46$) was significantly lower than that for office workers ($M = 3.89, SD = 0.58$). The difference between the mean score for teleworkers and for flexible workers ($M = 3.79, SD = 0.59$) approached significance ($p = .059$). There were no significant differences between the scores of office workers and flexible workers.

[INSERT TABLE 2.3 HERE]

Analyses of variance did not reveal any significant differences between teleworkers, flexible workers, and office workers with regard to their average scores on career orientation and personal life orientation.

The survey asked employees who make use of telework whether they would be willing to become office-based workers for the purpose of career progression. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare answers to this question for teleworkers and flexible workers. There was a significant difference in the scores for teleworkers ($M=4.41$, $SD=0.62$) and flexible workers ($M=1.70$, $SD=0.72$); $t(204)=2.91$, $p = 0.004$. These results are displayed in Table 4, and demonstrate that flexible workers are significantly more willing than teleworkers to take on an office-based position in order to advance their careers within the organization.

[INSERT TABLE 2.4 HERE]

When asked to identify reason(s) why they would be unwilling to take on an office-based position for career progression purposes, the two options most frequently selected by teleworking employees were “I am not interested in career progression” and “I like the job that I have”. Both these options were selected by 31% of respondents to this question. In comparison, 22% of respondents indicated that they would experience difficulties in managing their family commitments if they took on an office-based position, 21% reported that their commute to the nearest office would be too expensive, and 20% reported that their commute would be too long. Results are presented in full in Table 5.

[INSERT TABLE 2.5 HERE]

Discussion

Within our case study organization, employees who made heavy use of telework arrangements displayed considerably less career ambition than their colleagues who spent more time working at the office. These lower levels of career aspirations among teleworkers can be attributed to a number of factors. Working from home on a full-time basis is acknowledged by most organizational members as incompatible with holding a senior position; being promoted therefore necessitates committing to work from the office more often. However, the perception that a senior role would absolutely require office presence may be supported by an organization that values presenteeism amongst their top managers and does not fully adopt a flexible working culture. This lifestyle change does not appeal to many teleworkers, who value the convenience and comfort of their own work space at home and see more frequent work-related travel in a negative light due to the extra time and expense it incurs. The financial terms of a promotion are not always seen as compensating for the increased responsibilities of a more senior position and the economic and lifestyle costs of commuting to the office more frequently. The teleworkers in this organization clearly perceive a trade-off between holding a more senior position and their quality of life, which includes but is not restricted to work-life balance. Notably, none of the employees in the qualitative study made any mention of family commitments impacting their interest in career progression or lack thereof, and teleworking respondents in the quantitative study did not differ from their office-based colleagues with regard to caregiving responsibilities.

These findings may have theoretical implications as they run counter to several commonly accepted outcomes associated with flexible working practices. First, based on the traditional exchange relationship associated with flexible working practices, there is the presumption that employees who are offered high levels of autonomy in an organization are

likely to reciprocate with higher levels of commitment to the organization (e.g., Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). However, one possible explanation is that the facilitation of non-work related activities by telework actually leads to an increase in employees' normative commitment to, or desire to continue in, non-work roles (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Research suggests that antecedents to normative organizational commitment include socialization and investment (e.g., Meyer et al., 2002); individuals in extensive teleworking roles may find that the increased investment and socialization to other non-work obligations, afforded by the flexibility attributed to telework scheduling, leads to greater commitment in these non-work roles, in effect changing the balance of the exchange with work-related outcomes such as career progression. Similarly, employee identification with work may be weakened by extensive teleworking. Research suggests that as individuals work from home more extensively, identification with home-related roles may increase (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006).

Another possible theoretical explanation of the impact of telework on career ambition may be related to the uncertainty associated with the changes in the exchange relationship that might arise out of more senior-level organizational obligations. Research has examined the impact of individual differences in positive or negative attributions toward reciprocity as well as uncertainty associated with reciprocity on the relationship between social exchange and affective commitment (Perugini, Gallucci, Presaghi & Ercolani, 2003; Shore, Bommer, Rao & Seo, 2009). "Wary individuals either receiving or extending aid fear that others will violate the reciprocity norm through non-reciprocation of beneficial treatment" (Shore et al., 2009, p. 705). Those demonstrating higher levels of wariness may therefore experience less commitment to an organization despite high organizational efforts toward exchange. It might be argued that wariness can be attributed not only to innate individual qualities, but also to the contextual

stability associated with telework. Teleworkers may be reluctant to change the nature of their exchange relationship with the organization due to the fear or uncertainty that the greater commitment engendered by taking on a more senior role might not be reciprocated in benefits to them personally.

Given that this study represents a snapshot of employee attitudes rather than having tracked them over a period of many years, it is impossible to ascertain if there is a genuinely causal relationship between telework and career ambition. It is entirely plausible that some employees may self-select into full-time telework arrangements because of pre-existing, low aspirations for career advancement. However, a strong possibility remains that over time, employees experience working from home as so positive a practice that otherwise attractive opportunities, such as career progression, are seen as relatively less appealing. In 2014, Posseriede, Hassink and Plantenga found in their study of a representative sample of the Dutch labor force that while use of occasional telework did not have significant effects on employees' career progression, working from home more often was associated with fewer training opportunities and fewer promotions. They attributed these findings to the reduced visibility of teleworkers in the workplace, which organizational leaders may take as a signal of low commitment and potential for advancement. Our findings cast those of Posseriede et al. (2014) in a new light. While employees in environments focused on "face time" may indeed suffer limited career progression opportunities as a result of working from home, those in more results-oriented organizational cultures that focus less on visibility may simply be opting out of advancement opportunities in order to maintain a prized work arrangement. For employees whose organizational cultures fall somewhere in the middle – neither strongly focused on visible presence in the workplace, nor strongly emphasizing work results over location of work –

working from home for the majority of each week may be associated with fewer opportunities for advancement in conjunction with reduced career ambition. Both drivers of career stagnation may operate in tandem.

Implications for employers

Embedded flexible work arrangements such as telework may be seen by many as a very positive development, especially if these arrangements are decoupled from career progression processes and users of these practices have the same opportunities as office-based workers to pursue advancement and apply their talents on behalf of the organization. When such circumstances are in place, telework enables organizations to make full use of the skills of all workforce members and can have positive motivational effects on teleworkers. It appears, however, that organizations can have too much of a good thing. In the case study organization examined in this chapter, we see that employees who perform the majority of their work from home are self-selecting out of the managerial pipeline in order to avoid changing their work arrangements to come into the office more often.

There are potentially serious implications of these reduced career aspirations among teleworkers. Senior managers in the organization express concern that succession planning is rendered more difficult by having a large proportion of employees opt out of the promotion process. This is an especially problematic issue for organizations such as that featured in our case study, which have a very specific remit, whose work is not duplicated in other organizations, and who have no competitors per se. These organizations are reliant upon an internal labour market for staffing senior level positions. When management positions require detailed knowledge of work performed at lower levels and this work is unique to a specific public sector organization, hiring in managers from the external labour market is difficult to do and is likely to result in sub-

optimal results, in terms of the time required for new managers to acquaint themselves with the operations of the organization and become fully productive in the role (Bidwell, 2011).

How can these challenges be addressed?

Despite the high-profile withdrawal or reduction in telework availability at firms such as Yahoo, Best Buy, and Hewlett-Packard (Lavey-Heaton, 2014), working from home continues to increase due to both employee and employer demand. According to US Census data, 50% of the US workforce holds a job that is compatible with at least partial telework and between 80-90% would like to work from home on at least a part-time basis (Calnan, 2016). In the UK, informal surveys claim that nearly 24% of workers would rather be given permission to work from home one day per week than receive a pay raise (Institute of Inertia, 2017). Given these trends, some resolution to the challenges associated with telework and career progression is essential in order for organizations to retain, motivate and grow the roles of their top performing workers. In addition, telework serves an important role for employment of certain talent groups as well as in specific environmental contexts. For example, working from home is an important way for individuals with disabilities to access the labour market; at present, approximately 160,000 people with a disability work from home in the UK (TUC, 2016). However, if limited career development opportunities are available for employees working from home extensively, will individuals with disabilities lose the opportunity to progress into higher levels of the organizational hierarchy? Similarly, telework may be seen as a 'go-to' resolution for organizations, such as public sector organizations, who may be subject to austerity measures and reductions in public spending which constrain their operating budgets and force difficult decisions such as selling off office space and constraining the use of financial incentives for

behavioral change. However, turning to extensive telework to resolve extensive space and incentive issues may reduce organizational growth and competitiveness.

Therefore, managers and employees alike must remember that telework needs to serve the dual agenda of benefiting both workers and employers in order to be effective (Bailyn, 2011). To that end, a happy medium needs to be found between the extremes of a traditional, office-based work arrangement on the one hand and a full-time work from home arrangement on the other. There is a growing body of research to suggest that the best outcomes for both employees and organizations arise when telework is undertaken on a part-time rather than full-time basis. For example, curvilinear relationships have been found between extent of telework and job satisfaction, productivity, and both promotions and salary growth, with outcomes appearing to plateau or even decrease at extensive levels of telework (Golden, Eddleston, & Powell, 2017; Golden & Veiga, 2005; Hoornweg, Peter, & Van der Heijden, 2016). Organizations need therefore to be very careful about granting access to full-time telework for employees who would normally be considered eligible for eventual promotion. While working from home for the majority of each week may be appropriate for those who are nearing retirement or whose health conditions preclude them from office-based work, there should otherwise be requirements for teleworkers to spend at least two or three days per week at the office in order to retain them in the talent pipeline.

In addition to this measure, organizations may also wish to make telework usage contingent on an annual review carried out jointly by the teleworker and his or her line manager, rather than granting permission on an indefinite basis for employees to work from home. Is the working arrangement continuing to serve the dual agenda? What are the next steps with regard to career progression for the teleworker? How can the teleworker prepare for a more senior role in

the organization? This preparation might require the teleworker to work in the office more often; it might require the organization to re-examine its requirements for managers to maintain a frequent physical presence in the office. Solving the problem of telework and career progression will require flexibility in terms of both thought and action on the part of employees and organizations.

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Table 2.1: Basic, Organizing, and Global Themes

Basic themes	Organizing Themes	Global Theme
Comfort of working from home		
Lack of privacy / own space	Perceived difficulty in readjusting to working in office	
Different routine		
Less autonomy		
Increased time commuting		
Increased financial cost of commuting	Reluctance to travel for work purposes more frequently	
Inconvenience of travel		
Satisfaction with current work role		Prioritization of telework over career progression
Reluctance to take on more responsibility	Low career aspirations	
No alternative options locally		
Cost-benefit analysis		
Contingent on continuing to work from home at least two days per week	Interest in promotion	
Disengaged employees		
Succession planning	Problems for organization	

Table 2.2: Intercorrelations among Career Ambition, Career Orientation, Personal Life Orientation, and Willingness to Become Office-Based Workers for Purposes of Career

Progression variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Career ambition ^a	3.80	0.58			
2. Career orientation ^b	2.45	0.74	.24***		
3. Personal life orientation ^b	3.84	0.80	-.06	-.54***	
4. Willingness to become office-based ^c	1.64	0.72	.49***	.19**	-.13

Note. ^a *N* = 371. ^b *N* = 512. ^c *N* = 224.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 2.3: One-Way Analysis of Variance of Career Ambition by Telework Status

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between groups	3	4.52	1.51	4.66	.003
Within groups	369	119.30	0.32		
Total	372	123.81			

Note. $N = 371$.

Table 2.4: Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Willingness to Become Office-Based Workers for Purposes of Career Progression by Telework Arrangement

	Telework arrangement						95% CI		
	Teleworkers			Flexible workers			for Mean		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	Difference	t	df
Willingness to become office-based	1.41	0.62	74	1.70	0.72	132	0.10, 0.49	2.93**	204

Note. $N = 224$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 2.5: Reasons for unwillingness to take up office-based position for career progression purposes

Reason for unwillingness to take up office-based position for career progression purposes	Respondents citing reason
I like the job that I have.	64 (31%)
I am not interested in career progression.	63 (31%)
It would be difficult to manage my home/family commitments if I were to stop teleworking.	45 (22%)
My commute would be too expensive.	43 (21%)
My commute would be too long.	42 (20%)
I do not like the jobs that are available in the office.	19 (9%)
I do not like the office environment.	19 (9%)
I do not feel qualified to do another job.	6 (3%)
Other: Would not be able to work from office due to disability	2 (1%)

Note: N = 206 (132 flexible workers, 74 teleworkers)